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ABSTRACT

This review examines some of the basic sociological, psychological, and philosophical issues of childhood socialization, and briefly discusses some of the significant influences which impinge upon all children as they grow and develop within their society, sub-culture, and family. The stated purpose of the review is to provide a perspective for examining the basic assumptions which underly current research on parent-child relationships within the black family. Research in the 70's concerning the socialization of black children that also addresses various aspects of the influences in the black child's development is also examined. Research in general is said to be characterized by poor methodology, to ignore black families, and to concentrate on the black poor, father-absent families, the mother-child dyad, and to have an ethnocentric approach. The literature is seen to be discussed in terms of popular but misleading assumptions that seem to be explicitly involved when hypothesis are made concerning socialization patterns within black families. What are stated to be more promising approaches are also pointed out and two recent research projects are described in detail. In conclusion, the paper suggests a black child family-society interaction model said to be useful in the conceptualization of the socialization process, policy making, and program planning. (Author/AM)

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Socialization of Black Children: A Critical Review of the Literature on Parent-Child Relationships and Socialization Patterns within the Black Family

ABSTRACT

In order to provide a perspective for examining the basic assumptions which underlie current research on parent-child relationships within the Black family, this review examines some of the basic issues--sociological, psychological, and philosophical--of childhood socialization and briefly discusses some of the significant influences which impinge upon all children as they grow and develop within their society, sub-culture, and family. A Black child-family-society interaction model is discussed as a useful conceptualization of the socialization process.

Research of the 70's concerning the socialization of Black children that also touches on various aspects of the influences in the Black child's development is examined: the child, the family, the sub-culture, and the larger society in which Black children live. Research in general has tended to ignore Black families, has concentrated on the Black poor, father-absent family (whereas most Black families are two-parent and non-poor), has poor methodology, has focused almost exclusively on the mother-child dyad, and has usually been ethnocentric in its approach. The literature is discussed in terms of popular but misleading assumptions that seem to be explicitly involved when hypotheses are made concerning socialization patterns within Black families. These are (1) that Black children are different from white children, with the underlying corollary that Black children, once the deficits are eliminated, will become just like white children; (2) that the Black family provides a homogeneous environment for childrearing: there are no significant class or regional dif-

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ferences; (3) that the Black family is matriarchal; (4) that father absence has a negative effect upon Black children; (5) that the childrearing practices of Black parents are related to the academic achievement of Black children; and (6) that the self-concepts of Black children are dependent upon parental stability and economic status. More promising approaches are also pointed out and two recent research projects are described in some detail. The paper in conclusion suggests a model which involves Black children and their families, as well as the social science experts, which might be useful for policy making and program planning. An extensive bibliography is included.

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SOCIALIZATION OF BLACK CHILDREN:

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIALIZATION PATTERNS WITHIN THE BLACK FAMILY

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INTRODUCTION

The development of the child is a complex phenomenon that has been the focus of the attention of scientists and philosophers, as well as parents, the world over. Developmental psychology and child psychology have claimed the child for concentrated study and research. Within the past decade or so this research has also begun to include consideration of the family itself as a field of psychological study (Handel, 1965). With the contributions of psychiatry, sociology and anthropology, as well as psychology and social work, a substantial body of knowledge and information has been accumulating which bears upon understanding the socialization and developmental processes of the child within the family. This knowledge presumably leads to more effective child rearing practices in a society that, as Zigler and Child (1973) observe, seems to be extraordinarily concerned with the problem of how to raise children so that they will become, not just adequate or competent adults, but superior members of their society.

A prime example of our natural concern with child rearing is the policy-oriented research supported by government funds which developed out of the 1965 U. S. Labor Department publication, The Negro Family: The Case for National Action, popularly known as the Moynihan Report. Although subsequently widely repudiated by social scientists (Carper, 1966; Billingsley, 1970; Ryan, 1971), this narrowly conceived study which seemed to show the "inadequacies" and "incompetencies" of Black families and Black children used census statistics to establish the "fact" that Black mothers socialize their children inappropriately and maladaptively. In a political climate that advocated "doing something" about the problems of the poor, with the family having been "identified"

as "the source" of the problems of the poor, and with social science pointing to the primacy of the parent in the socialization process, then governmental policy which sponsored and promoted programs designed to intervene in the child rearing practices and education of certain groups who are not in the mainstream of American culture became legitimate, sensible, responsible, even politically attractive, even though the policy itself was based on questionable research.

All of this, of course, is well known, and intervention programs, as they were conceived in the days of the "War on Poverty", following the Moynihan Report, were generally ineffective in solving the problems of the poor (Pillisuk and Pillisuk, 1973). Now new parent-child programs are being developed that are more sophisticated than the Head Start programs of the sixties. Are these programs better? Are they based on findings of reliable social science research?

When a society designates certain people as "experts" in child development and these "experts" begin to make decisions about how children should be socialized and when these decisions begin to be implemented in programs which, not only encourage, but actually teach parents the "correct way" to rear their children (Gordon, 1969; Karnes, 1968; Badger, 1970), then it is important that all the factors that are involved in the socialization and developmental process be understood. We must understand not only the basic nature of the developing child, but the nature and effects of the socializing agents which influence his/her development and the society in which he/she is to function. It is especially important that the childhood socialization process be understood in all of its aspects, including parts of the picture that are often overlooked, the role of the society as interpreted through the subculture of which the parent and child are part.

It is the purpose of this paper first to examine some of the basic issues - sociological, psychological, and philosophical - of childhood socialization, to discuss briefly some of the significant influences which impinge upon all children as they grow and develop within their society, sub-culture and family, and then to point out and clarify basic assumptions which underlie current research into parent-child relationships within the Black family. The theoretical conceptualizations which undergird socialization research will be useful in developing some understanding of the socialization of Black children to the extent that they provide a framework for viewing empirical studies of Black parents and their children.

Recent research findings concerning the socialization of Black children will be examined and discussed in terms of assumptions about Black families that appear in the literature. The concern here is with the appropriateness and adequacy of methodology, as well as with the significance of the empirical findings.

Theory and Research Methodology

In his critique of the family research methodologies summarized by Hoffman and Lippett, Handel (1965) observed that "the entire presentation of family research methods in psychology is cast explicitly within the cause-effect framework of parent influencing child" (p. 19). Environmental influences are seen as acting upon the child, principally as an unidirectional dyadic model of parent-child interaction; that is, as parent shaping child.

The limitations of this conceptualization are most apparent when applied to understanding the dynamics of the forces involved in the socialization of the minority child where the sociogenic and psychogenetic factors are especially complex. Minority children in American culture

are products of both a separate sub-culture and of American culture. They are part of a culture within a culture and their genetic and cultural inheritance is similar to, yet different from, that of the broader society (Valentine, 1971). What theoretical conceptualizations help explain socialization processes under conditions of marginality or pluralism where there are contradictory or differentially significant influences on a child?

The Relationship of Socialization to Social Structure: The Influence of Environment

A recurring question among sociologists is the issue Inkeles (1969) describes as the "chicken and egg" problem. Does the nature of the social order determine how children will be reared or do people who have been socialized a certain way influence society accordingly? Aberle suggests that socialization practices are related to economic conditions. The connection can be shown, he says, by studying variations in child rearing practices according to economic practices, or by studying cultures that have undergone changes in their modes of production and comparing the child rearing practices in the old culture and the new. Aberle believes that the social order of a culture, including its economy, directly affects socialization practices in that culture. He states explicitly that "factors, not themselves the results of socialization, can be seen to affect socialization practices and through them (as well as directly) the personalities of constituent members of the society" (quoted in Inkeles, 1969, p. 381). He states further that the socialization patterns of a society are influenced to a great extent by the particular ecology and technology of the culture, as well as by its economy and political organization. He suggests that it is important to study "the impact not only of ecological and technological factors, but of economic and

political factors on units in which the bulk of child socialization occurs - the family in almost all societies" ... (quoted in Inkeles, 1969, p. 383).

Inkeles suggests that sub-cultures within larger cultures are responsive first to the particular economic or political realtiy of that sub-culture. The theory has been supported by some research, such as the Miller and Swanson (1958) studies which focused upon subgroups within the American working and middle class. Using father's occupation as representative of the society's economic reality for the parent, child rearing patterns of adults in "bureaucratic" and in "entrepreneurial" types of employment were assessed. The bureaucratic parent was found to be more rewarding of social skills and accommodative, getting-along-with-others type of responses. The more entrepreneurial parents were less indulgent and valued self-reliance and initiative in their children's behavior.

Kohn's (1974) research also investigated the relationship between parental values and their status in the economic-social structure in American society, the assumption being that parental patterns of child rearing will reflect their values, which in turn are determined by the person's social class membership. Kohn suggested that the requirements and demands of middle-class occupations demand a different hierarchy of personal attributes than working class occupations. For example, middle-class occupations often deal with symbols and ideas. Leadership and initiative, as well as skill in interpersonal relations, are necessary for job success. Working-class occupations are more involved with the manipulations of things, tasks are routinized, supervised, and directed, and advancement on the job is often due to group effort, such as union activity, rather than through individual competition. Parents, then,

socialize children according to their basic ideas as to appropriate adult behavior. When the development of self-direction is important to parents, children are encouraged to develop awareness of and response to their inner states. When ability to fit into a group structure and comply to set rules and procedures is important, then parents teach children to respond to external demands.

The differences in middle-class and working-class parental values, Kohn suggests, are "probably a function of the entire complex of differences in life conditions characteristic of the ... social classes" (Kohn, 1974, p. 285).

These differences, as Kohn points out, lead not so much to differences in how parents shape behavior (via punishment or via role modeling), but determine what parents identify as appropriate behavior or undesirable misbehavior. Kohn further suggests that these differences result in parents having different views concerning responsibilities as parents. Parents socialize their children according to how their life circumstances "socialized" them. Kohn does not account, however, for the fact that in many families children are socialized most by their mothers who, in their child's early years at least, have not usually been employed.

Parental Behavior: Mediating Influence Between Society and the Child

The line of research which examines the connections between social structure and parental values assumes the mediating agent to be the parent who is "consciously preparing his children for the demands society will place on him" (Hess, 1970, p. 470). The family in which the child lives interprets for him initially which of the conflicting messages he receives from the world around him "are important and worthy of attention and which are not."

These theories suggest a connecting link between the structure of a

society (the roles and behavior patterns the society demands and rewards) and parental training of children to fill these roles. Societal values then are seen to influence parental socialization practices in that society. Dissimilar experiences of persons in different socio-economic strata within the industrial political system would be expected to lead to different parental values and different patterns of child rearing. This broader conceptualization acknowledges the influence of the family structure which reflects the larger society to which it belongs. The theory also recognizes the influence of parental mediation wherein parents consciously and unconsciously socialize their children for survival.

Individual Behavior: The Child's Role in Socialization

The sociological view of socialization as developed in the theories of Parsons (1964), Inkeles (1969), and Spiro (1961), does not assume that early socialization in childhood necessarily must be compatible with a society's actual adult role demands, particularly in times of rapid social change. The role demands of the social structure are seen as operating in response to a society's needs. Personality development, on the other hand, also involves the individual's responses to the demands of his own basic drives. Society survives through the adaptation of the individual's social behavior to meet his own needs and the needs of the society as well. The interdependence of these two systems in this conceptualization is described by LeVine (1970):

> "Whatever its role demands, the social system must allow individuals sufficient satisfaction of their intrapsychic needs; and whatever their press for satisfaction, individuals must perform appropriately in their social roles; when these conditions are not met, change toward a more stable situation must occur" (LeVine, p. 509).

In order to understand these developmental sequences and the environmental socialization influences as presented above, one must also view the child, as an active agent, constructing his own identity, making his own

choices, rather than simply reacting to parental demands. Clausen has written

> "An examination of the range of socialization influences over time can give some indication of the kinds of choices that are available, the circumstances under which they are made, and the ways in which the individual maximizes his ability to fill the roles available to adult members of his society" (Clausen, 1968, p. 176).

The cognitive developmentalists, such as Piaget and Kohlberg, who are concerned with the enculturative or socialization process, as well as the cognitive, postulate universal sequences or stages of cognitive development, which all children go through, as basically determining how children acquire beliefs and ways of thinking common to their own culture. To the structural developmentalists, "the study of enculturation becomes the study of interaction between cultural beliefs transmitted to the child through teaching and social experience, on the one hand, and universal stages of cognitive development, on the other" (LeVine, p. 506).

These approaches go beyond a cause-effect framework and bring the child into the picture as an active agent, influenced by the environment, but also acting upon the environment. Here there may be interaction in more than one direction.

To understand the socialization of the Black child, then, involves theories which posit not only the effects of parent to child interactions but also consider the forces of the environment in a culture-family interaction model and the influence of the child in a parent-child interaction model.

A Child-Family-Society Interaction Model: Socialization of the Black Child

One might conceptualize this socialization process through a model which views the child as an active organism which develops as it interacts with parents, who are interacting with the family, which interacts with

a sub-culture, which influences and is influenced by the larger society. The model in its simplist form may be pictorially represented as follows:

Rather than looking at the Black child as inferior to an idealized white child and one who must be brought up to certain standards, as many social scientists tended to do in the past (Baratz and Baratz, 1970), this conceptualization allows Black children to be viewed in the context of their reality - living within Black families within a Black/white world. The shift is from a medical-deficit model that concentrates on curing what is wrong with the child (intellectual deficits, for example) toward an ecological model that recognizes an organism interacting actively and purposely with its environment.

Most Black children in the United States are socialized into the value systems of the Black community and into the value systems of the dominant middle-class society as well, even when many values may be conflicting or even incompatible. The successful Black person today is often one who must function within the sub-culture of the Black community as well as within the educational, business, industrial and social worlds of the white middle-class (as, for example, within colleges and universities or within the business corporate structure).

Willie (1974b) used the concept of the marginal man to explain the phenomenon of the Black man/woman in a Black/white world. Drawing upon the concepts of Parks and Stonequist, he described the marginal man as poised between two social worlds, participating in both, but not totally a part of either. The socialization of the Black child in this conceptualization cannot be considered separately from the particular and special environment in which he/she is developing, an environment that not only

includes the observable stresses of poverty or discrimination, but the ambiguity and marginality of living in two worlds, the white world and the Black world.

Rodman (1971), has described the apparent ambiguity of values and attitudes seen in poor Black families in terms of the "lower class value stretch". According to this theory, lower class families share middle-class ideology but, lacking the opportunity and resources to achieve middle-class goals, they stretch their range of values to sanction, also, behavior adaptive to their particular circumstances.

Valentine (1971), has employed a "bi-cultural model of Afro-American behavior" to distinguish between cultural values and the circumstantial or situational adaptations of Black families. Black children in this conceptualization are "simultaneously enculturated and socialized in two different ways of life, a contemporary form of their traditional ... (afro-American) lifeways and mainstream Euro-American culture" (p. 141).

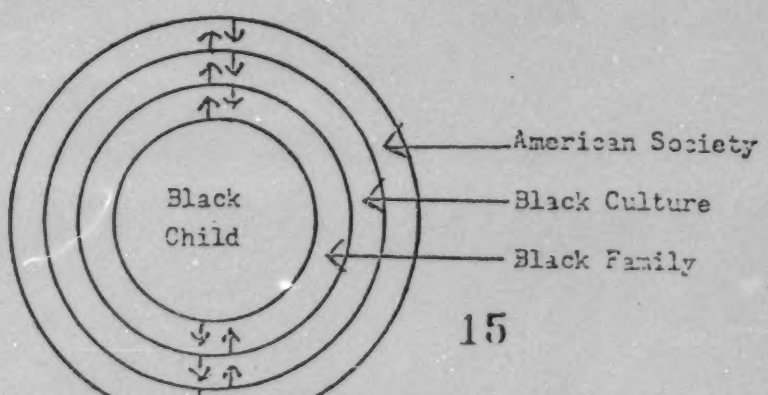
A more philosophical conceptualization has been expressed in a duality of reality framework. The African writer, Achebe (1959), has described this duality phenomenon in his novels. The American writer, Richard Wright (1957), acknowledged this duality within himself when he wrote, "I and my environment are one, but that oneness has in it, at its very core, an abiding schism ... (for) being a Negro living in a white Western Christian society ... (means that there is a) contradiction of being both Western and a man of color" (p. 78 - 79).

Dixon (1971) recognized the dual existence of the Black person in America as the model toward which Black American children are socialized. Blacks must function in two worlds, and the "identity confusion" of Black adolescents, postulated by Erikson, is not confusion but the reality of the two

different reference groups with which they simultaneously identified (Dixon, 1971; Staples, 1971).

Dixon further observed that both whites and Blacks actually function in a Black-white world, that "each racial group embodies both Black and white cultures." Rather than viewing racial identities as "mutually antagonistic," Dixon described the roles as "complementary" and conceived the socialization process within a "diunital conceptual framework." This theory acknowledges America as both Black and white, not just Black or white, and the theory encompasses, not just the socialization of the Black child, but the white child as well (Dixon and Foster, 1971, p. 4-5).

These writers are recognizing the subculturality of Black families and are accounting for the various influences on their lives which are unique to their situation, living within and interacting with a dominant host culture. In this respect the environmental experiences of Black families and other third world American subcultures are different from white Americans. To understand the socialization of the child, Black or white, social scientists must account for all phenomena. For the Black child this not only means interaction between the Black child and his family, but interaction involving the Black subculture (or Black community) and the dominant American society as well. The model, pictured below (adapted from Billingsley, 1968) accounts for all the interactive forces which affect and are affected by the Black child.



The foregoing formulations provide some basis for viewing the literature relating to the socialization of Black children and it provides a perspective for the study of parent-child relationships within the Black family. This ecological model allows the exposure of research which has a pathological emphasis (the medical-deficit model) and it will tend to reveal the ethnocentrism or culture bias which may undergird an experiment or research project. It is from the perspective of this ecological model that recent research will now be examined.

Research on Black families

We really know very little about what goes on within families, most especially sub-cultural groups such as the Black American family. Sociological, psychological research has tended to ignore the Black family. Moreover, when research projects on the Black family were attempted, the studies have generally been disappointing. In the first place this research has concentrated on the Black poor. Although only 28% of Black families are in the poverty category[1], it is this group which is most frequently described in the sociological literature (Peters, 1974). Just as the white middle-class child has for years represented all white children in the child development literature, the Black child in the poor Black family has been synonymous with all Black children.

This concentration on the Black poor, however, has not even provided adequate information about <u>that</u> group for social science has been most concerned with describing how the poor, uneducated, and unemployed Black minority do <u>not</u> manage to compete successfully in the education or occupational

[1]The median income for Black families in 1973 was $7,270. 72% of Black families had incomes above the poverty level in 1973. (U.S. Census Bureau, 1974)

world. There has been little investigation of the life styles of poor families, their coping mechanisms, survival strategies, or strengths which have allowed them, for 300 years, to raise children under adverse conditions. Emphasis on "cultural deprivation" has ignored the culture and helps to account for the paucity of hard data concerning Black families.

The Moynihan Report, referred to earlier, is perhaps the prototype of the line of sociological/psychological studies on the Black family which has documented poverty. Such studies usually looked for correlations among such variables as father absence, mother's lack of education, or parental unemployment, and the academic failures of their children. Often these studies are comparative - for example, Blacks compared to whites or father absent families compared to father present families - with the salient variable assumed to be Black race or father absence. This variable, then, is hypothesized as affecting children negatively and many other kinds of variables will be correlated with the phenomenon, ranging from delinquency (Rosen, 1969) to future marital success (Scanzoni, 1970).

Very few studies control for family size[1] or ordinal position or maternal employment (some do not control for sex of child), although we know these variables relate to some of the child characteristics being studied. Often socio-economic variables may be inappropriately applied. Sometimes race is confused with class, as when middle-class/lower-class comparisons are confounded by white-Black differences (for example, see Ward, 1972). Often social stratification measures suitable for white American families are applied to Black American families and

[1]Even when appropriate controls are applied, however, the carefully obtained data may be interpreted pejoratively. For example, Schoggen and Schoggen (1971) in their study which matched Black and white, urban and rural, middle-class and lower-class three-year-old children, nevertheless stated that they collected the data in order to assess "the nature of psycho-social deprivation" (p. 1).

measurement instruments and value judgments appropriate for the dominant culture are used to rate or classify Black children and their families. These studies project little about the parent-child relationships within the Black family beyond the general image of a Black matriarch who is struggling to raise a large family in her cluttered, non-book-containing home, against conditions of exhausting poverty. This approach not only postulates questionable cause and effect relationships but it assumes that the important independent variables, such as family structure or academic achievement, are dependent ones.

The shotgun approach used in many studies which correlate SES variables with whatever other variables are of immediate interest adds little to the theory or knowledge about Black families. Moreover, the purpose of this research which either documents poverty or compares various aspects of poor Black families with mainstream white families has never been to study Black family life within a viable sub-culture. The assimilationist perspective of Frazier (1948) and Myrdal (1944) some years ago assumed that Black families should assimilate into the mainstream of American life. This assumption has made it legitimate to point out the inadequacies of Black families so that they could then become similar to (if not the same as) other Americans. It has been primarily creative writers such as Wright (1945) or Hansberry (1958) or certain anthropologists/sociologists, such as Lewis (1964) Liebow (1966) Abrahams (1970) Ladner, (1971), who have been interested in the Black family as a fully-functioning institution where Black children are socialized into their culture. The purpose of much social science research in the past has been "to improve" the Black family.

An example of this is research which has centered around Parent and

Child Centers, such as Home Start. Hunt (1975) has described these projects as "an innovative attempt to intervene constructively in the educational functioning of families and neighborhoods of the poor" (p. 229). These programs focus on the cognitive development of children and train parents to alter their normal patterns of interaction with their children in order to adopt verbal patterns generally employed by middle-class mothers of academically competent children (Levenstein, 1969; Karnes, 1968; Badger, 1970; Gordon, 1969).

In sum, a basic criticism of much of the Black family research is its ethnocentric bias. The common sense perspective of the typical social scientist, who is usually white and/or middle-class, seems to influence his/her sociological intuition and best hunches so that the researcher freely and naively generalizes from a particular experiment, involving a small sample of Black people, in a particular place, at a certain time to all other Black people (who in the scientist's own personal, necessarily limited, experience seemed to share one or more general characteristics of the sample group). Thus some sociologists write of "the" Black family, as if Black families were an homogeneous group; other, more sophisticated sociologists may make a distinction between lower-class and middle-class Black families in the research design and then treat these two groups as if <u>they</u> were monolithic. (For detailed criticisms of social science bias in research on Black families see Billingsley, 1973; Murray, 1973; Baratz and Baratz, 1971.)

There are other problems, too, in studies involving Black families where socio-economic distinctions are made. Recent research has questioned the comparability of SES categories across the racial groups (Crisby, 1971;

Thorpe, 1972; Daniel, 1972). Researchers who have speculated about social class differences among Black families have all decried the lack of experimental data (Frazier, 1948; Billingsley, 1968; Staples, 1971; Willie, 1974a). A definitive study of social stratification in the Black community, however, has yet to be conducted. What are the significant social class differences within Black families? Are concepts of middle-class or lower-class comparable across racial groups? These questions cannot yet be answered with assurance, but they must be considered. Grisby (1971) contends that since American stratification theory is based on the "notion of white normative consensus," a process in which Black Americans have not participated, then standard social-class concepts cannot legitimately be applied to Blacks.

There is some evidence that the Black community does not assign social class levels in ways equivalent to the standard social class indices of measurement (Thorpe , 1972) and Blacks and whites have been shown to differ in social class identification. In his comparative study Daniel (1972) found that Black men and white men are essentially similar in the criteria they use to define their own social class, but that Black and white working wives differ. However, most social science research involving Black families does not consider the social class issue at all. It either casually assumes that all Black families are poor or that social class distinctions can be applied similarly to Blacks and whites.[1] Some studies fail to make social class distinctions at all. These oversights can result in faulty interpretation of data.

In addition, assigning lower socio-economic status to Black families rarely takes into consideration that many Black families are upwardly mobile.

[1]One explanation of Moynihan's inability to understand the dynamics of Black poor families is that he assumed that Black poor and white poor were basically alike (Willie, 1970).

Investigations of the dynamics of parent-child interactions or of the impact of unemployment or of father absence, for example, generally assume that these situations are static and unchanging over time. Walters and Stinnett (1971) observed in their decade review of research on parent-child relationships that

> "It is interesting that theory upon which our research is based concerning parent-child relationships frequently ignores changes in roles among social classes and among ethnic groups over periods of time. That parents have a differential impact among various ethnic groups, and that this impact is different at various stages of the family life cycle is not always carefully delineated" (p. 101).

A study involving in-depth interviews with middle- and lower-class Black families which focused on behaviors, attitudes, and relationships of family members over time found that upward mobility of families was often accompanied by changes in the behavior and relationships of the husband and wife, both within the family and without (Yost, 1973). This line of approach suggests the desirability of studying a variety of Black families in each social class level through the various stages of the family life cycle. A random sample of the low-income families on AFDC, living in a housing project, whose children attend Head Start may not be representative of other low-income families and their children, although the assumption tends to be made, either implicitly or explicitly. These findings, moreover, may not even be representative of their own life style at another period in their life cycle.[1]

Parent-Child Interaction Research

Perhaps the most promising studies of Black families have been the

[1]Kriesberg (1970) found that female head-of-family was often a temporary status of mothers living in a low-income housing project, and their children had lived in a two parent household at an earlier time and many would be living in a two-parent household at a later time in their lives.

parent-child interaction studies. However, this research , although innovative and sometimes productive of useful data, also often suffers from the ethnocentric perspective discussed above. When the interactions of middle-class Black (or white) parents and their children are observed to differ from the parent-child interactions in lower-class Black (or white) families, the behaviors of the middle-class parent-child dyad are viewed as the norm, especially when they correlate with the child's academic achievement (Hess and Shipman, 1965; Kamii and Radin, 1967). The differing behaviors of the lower-class or Black parent-child team are often judged to be dysfunctional (Levenstein, 1969; Karnes, 1968; Gordon, 1969).

There are additional problems with the early parent-child interaction studies. In the first place, parent-child is usually translated into mother-child and the father-child relationship is typically viewed from the anomalous father-absence perspective -- that is, father becomes important because he is not there. Few investigators have explored the dynamics of the father-son relationships, much less the father-daughter relationships within the Black family, even though the father is present in 66% of all Black families[1] (U. S. Census Bureau, 1974). (A notable exception here is Smith's (1972) investigation of the family roles of Black lower-class fathers which found fathers to be active in child rearing and in family activities).

Research which examines parent-child interaction patterns within Black families has certain methodological weaknesses in the procedures employed. In many studies, the low-income (and middle-income) mother was asked to

[1]The father is not absent in 72% of Black families with income of $5,000-$7,000; he is not absent in 84% of Black families with income of $7,000 - $10,000. (U.S. Census Bureau, 1972)

bring her child to an institution for the study. The parent-child interaction dyads were then observed in a laboratory setting. This can present an unfamiliar and threatening situation to the lower-class mother, so that the laboratory-induced behavior is not necessarily typical of everyday behavior. There is some evidence of this. In a comparison of the usefulness of information of parent-child interaction obtained in an experimental playroom situation and data obtained using other techniques (such as naturalistic home observation, parent interview, and parental 24-hour diaries) Lytton (1974) found that the "experimentally obtained playroom measures did not produce higher validity" (p. 51). The structured experiment was found to be the least productive of reliable findings. Lytton also suggested that young children, as well as their mothers, may behave "atypically, being overawed by the strange surroundings," even in what appears to the experimenter to be a non-threatening situation.

Not only may the observed parent-child behavior in the laboratory setting be distorted, but the parent interview usually held at the same time to obtain information concerning parental child-rearing practices and goals may be misleading. We know that discrepancies often exist between parental reports to strange interviewers concerning their child-rearing techniques and the actual typical parental practices (Christie and Lindauer, 1963). Intent and execution often differ, and parents may respond to questions concerning their behavior in terms of what they believe the interviewer will approve.

There are still other problems in this approach. The consistency of the relationship between parental attitudes and their behaviors, so often assumed in parent interview studies, has been found, when actually tested, to be questionable. Not only has parental recall be found to be somewhat

unreliable - parents often painting a rosier picture than actually existed (Yarrow, 1970) - but parental *reports of their attitudes* toward childrearing and family life obtained through parent interview situations have been found to differ significantly from their actual behaviors in their interactions with their children (Zunich, 1971).

The parent-child model itself is constrictive, especially when applied to Black families. There are various patterns of interaction within low-income Black families that the dyadic parent-child model cannot accomodate. Important relationships may then be neglected or accorded less attention and significance in the research design. Bronfenbrenner (1973), in fact, has called the theoretical parent-child, dyadic model "ecologically invalid". Although much has been written about the extended Black family (Rainwater, 1970; Ladner, 1971; Stack, 1974a; Billingsley, 1968) little attention has been paid to the sub-systems of grandmother-child dyadic interactions or even the grandmother-mother-child triadic interactions within the Black family.

None of the above criticisms of social science research involving Black children and their families are new. When Black family studies have been reviewed in the past, criticisms similar to these have been made (Darmofall, 1972; Vander Zanden, 1973; Lieberman, 1973; Barnes, 1972). Staples (1971) in a review of Black family research published in one of the decade review issues of the Journal of Marriage and the Family summarized the studies up to the seventies as being characterized by weak methodology, biased and low samples, inadequate research instruments, unjustified inferences from the data, pejorative assumptions, and use of the white middle-class as the norm. In addition the Moynihan Report and its deficiencies were discussed by Staples in some detail (as have

other critics: Ryan, 1971; Carper, 1966; Rainwater and Yancey, 1967). Although one might expect subsequent research to have avoided these shortcomings, most studies of Black families suffer from one or more of these problems. To what extent are these criticisms applicable to research developed in the first half of the decade of the seventies? This will be the focus of the remainder of this paper.

In order to counteract the atheoretical perspective of so much of the research on Black families, the studies of the seventies included here will be examined in terms of several basic assumptions which seem, subtly or overtly, to subsume much of the research involving Black children and their parents.

ASSUMPTIONS CONCERNING PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIALIZATION OF BLACK CHILDREN

Assumption 1: Black children are different from white children

As we have shown, it is often assumed that Black children are deficient when compared to white children. Once the deficiencies are identified and measured, it is believed, health, educational, and psychological programs can be developed to eliminate the deficits so that Black children will become just like white children. An example of this concept is seen in this excerpt from Deutsch's (1972) discussion in "The Disadvantaged Child and the Learning Process."

> "the lower-class child enters the school situation so poorly prepared to produce what the school demands that initial failures are almost inevitable, and the school experience does nothing to counteract the invidious influences to which he is exposed in his slum and sometimes segregated neighborhood ... There are various differences in the kinds of socializing experiences these children have had as contrasted with the middle-class child ..."
>
> ..."The relationship between social background and school performance is not a simple one. Rather, evidence which is accumulating

points more and more to the influence of background variables on the patterns of perceptual, language, and cognitive development of the child and the subsequent diffusion of the effects of such patterns into all areas of the child's academic and psychological performance. To understand these effects requires delineating the underlying skills in which these children are not sufficiently proficient." ...

"A related problem is that of defining what aspects of the background are most influential in producing what kinds of deficits in skills." (Ital. added, Deutsch, 1972, p. 477)

Deutsch clearly sees the logical "solution" to the Black child's "problem" as assimilation of Black culture into white America; so diffences are necessarily seen as deficits and therefore as undesirable.

In this ethnocentric thinking American culture includes only the values of the white middle class. Rather than study the interaction of the child and his environment as a viable whole within a theory which takes into account all elements involved, the researcher selectively emphasizes those parts of the situation which either fit or contrast his previously conceived hypothesis. Often the concern is principally with the child's cognitive development, so that deficits are determined solely in terms of those behaviors defined as unacceptable by school teachers, test administrators, employment counselors or college admission officers. There is little interest in what the child can do, what he is like, how he interacts in his environment at home or on the street with his friends. In fact, this perspective overlooks the fact that many Black children possess remarkable talents and competencies, also the result of the socialization practices of Black parents. Ginsburg (1972) in summarizing this research of the sixties which documented cognitive deficiencies of Black children in his provocative book, The Myth of the Deprived Child, also emphasized the narrow focus of this approach.

This search for deficits actually lessens the possibility of finding similarities. Indeed, several well-controlled comparative studies which assumed

racial differences as the independent variable have found that the factor of race alone is a poor predictor variable. For example, Baldwin and Baldwin (1973) in a report of their study of maternal-child behavior where naturalistic observations were made of mother-child interactions in free-play situations stated that when educational levels were controlled, no differences were observed between Black mothers and white mothers on the quality of their interactions or on the complexity of their verbalizations, although differences in other areas were found.

Similarly, Schoggen and Schoggen (1971) found no behavioral parent-child interaction differences between the Black and white subjects based on race alone when socio-economic status and other variables were carefully controlled. This is not to suggest, let me hasten to add, that well-controlled studies of Black parent-child interaction compared to white parent-child interaction have found no differences. Baumrind (1972), for example, found that authoritarian child-rearing practices of some Black families socialized girls into independent and self-assertive behavior while authoritarian child-rearing in white families led to dependent behavior in children. In a study of younger children, (9-18 months old) and their interaction with their mothers, Clarke-Stewart (1973) found differences in the mother-child relations of the Black as compared to the white mothers. The focus in parent-child interaction studies such as these is principally on the interaction, rather than on comparison so that behaviors are viewed within the context of the child's environment. This allows Baumrind to suggest that the authoritarian practices of Black mothers may lead to different, but valuable consequences in the Black child and that the authoritarian practices "may have as their explicit objective to develop toughness and self-sufficiency in Black girls and thus be perceived by them, not as rejecting but as nurturant

care taking" (p. 266). In the Clarke-Stewart research, differences in children's development was shown to be related to maternal responsiveness, stimulations, and appropriateness - areas in which Black mothers differed from white mothers. The important distinction here is that these studies examine precursors of behavior with mother-child interactions rather than attribute behaviors to such factors as racial identity or economic status. In these studies a difference is not defined as a deficit.

In much research, however, findings of differences between racial groups cannot be adequately interpreted. When research involves comparison of Blacks and whites, background factors are often not carefully controlled. When results are reported, then, it is not clear if differences found are related to racial identity or to economic status or to life style differences, although the findings are often discussed in terms of racial differences. An example of this is seen in Ward's (1972) comparison study of the sex-role preference and parental imitation of middle-class white children and lower-class Black children in the second grade. Ward concludes, "There appears to be a dominant masculine influence in the development of sex-role preference among middle-class, white children and a dominant feminine influence in parental imitation among lower-class black children" (p. 654).

Even if one could legitimately generalize from 32 second-grade children attending the Campus School of the State University College in Brockport, New York, to all middle-class white and lower-class Black children, as Ward did, this sweeping conclusion would still be unjustified, for it is an inaccurate representation of the research findings. Ward reports that "On the average, the black boys imitated the father 9 times and the mother 9 times" (p. 654). A more plausible interpretation of this (if one were not looking for deviance) might be that the families of these nine boys were egalitarian, indicating mother and father influences. Ward's interpretation is an example of an investigator's attempt to fit

data into preconceived conceptions about Black children and their families.

The Ward study is, in addition, an example of research which uses an instrument to measure the performance of Black children that has been standardized on a non-comparable group. This widely practiced procedure has been criticized by a number of social scientists (Barnes, 1972; Williams, 1971; Bay Area Association of Black Psychologists, 1972). Psychometrists and test administrators are becoming aware of the limitations of standardized tests when used on Black children, especially lower-class Black children, as in this study. The use of the It Scale for Children by Brown to measure sex-role preference of both the Black and white children and interpreting the performance of each group similarly only reveals the actual sex-role preference of the group for whom the test was designed to be used. The performance of the Black children reveals, not their male-female sex-role preference as determined within their Black family and Black sub-culture, but only how these children's values compare with the values white middle-class children have about male-female sex-role performance within the white middle-class culture.

It is interesting to note in these comparative studies the consistent sequence of terminology in which the results are reported. In many studies which focus on comparisons, the Black child will be compared to the white child who represents the norm - even when the white subjects are not in the majority, as when the subjects are distributed equally between the two racial groups.

Entwisle (1972), for example, referred to Blacks as being "less opposed" to their mothers working outside the home. Gold and St. Ange (1974) observed that the Black subjects gave "fewer" sterotypic responses to questions about male/female sex roles. Stinnett et al (1973) found that the Black subjects experienced "closer" parent-child relationships, that

Black families were "more mother oriented, and that the parents of Black children were "much less likely" to be at home. Orum and Cohen (1973) found Black children to be "much more disaffected" with politics. The subtle ethnocentrism here is usually unrecognized. Blacks are compared to an unarticulated norm and the responses of these subjects are discussed principally in terms of their racial identities. Although the methodology may be carefully controlled for such background variables as family income, employment and education of parents, number of children or place of residence, the discussion in these comparative studies tends to center on observed racial differences.

When social scientists conceive research involving Black and white children and their parents from a comparative perspective - that is, Black subjects compared to white subjects - with the focus on the lack (or presence) of some difference, they fail to recognize the real significance of their results. Concentration upon the fact of difference seems to obscure the more salient findings of the research. This results in discussions and conclusions which attempt to explicate the observed differences from an idealized goal rather than analyses and descriptions which attempt to understand the dynamics of the observed ecological situation.

When the findings of all of these studies are examined in terms of whether or not the data support the hypothesis that Black children are different from white children, one gets the impression that Black children may be different from white children in some areas and perhaps similar to white children in other areas. The researcher does not, however, gain much information in these comparative-type studies concerning what Black children are like, what their competencies are under differing circumstances, or what the observed behaviors mean - although these data may have been obtained. If the researcher were to examine the data on Black children

outside of the comparative framework vis à vis the white child, interesting information about Black children might begin to emerge. These Black boys and Black girls, it might be suggested, are being socialized into patterns of relationships which appear to be egalitarian. Free of the need to compare, the researcher might observe that the second grade Black boys and girls were influenced by both mother and father (Ward, 1972); Black adolescents expected mothers, as well as fathers, to be in the labor force (Entwisle, 1972); Black elementary school girls saw males and females as sharing sex roles (Gold and St. Ange, 1974); and Black high school girls, like their male peers, expected to be employed after marriage and children (Kuvlesky and Obordo, 1972). This kind of information promotes the development of hypotheses which can be investigated through future research which can lead to further understanding of Black children. Black children are, of course, different from white children. Research which focuses on comparing Black children with white children, assuming white children to be the norm, however, adds little to understanding the socialization of Black children.

Assumption 2: The Black family provides an homogeneous environment for child rearing: there are no significant class or regional differences.

While Black families in the United States have been accurately described as sharing many similar characteristics and behavior patterns (Billingsley, 1968; Valentine, 1968) - the consequences of a common African/slavery heritage and the continuing necessity for adaptation to varying degrees of oppression and racism - Black families are not monolithic. They have much in common, but they also have varied life styles, values and attitudes (Willie, 1974a).

There is a strong and viable Black middle-class (Billingsley, 1968; Willie, 1974a) and there is a large and stable working class which does

not exhibit pathology and disorganization (Hill, 1972; Scanzoni, 1971; Staples, 1974; Willie, 1970; 1974a), although neither has attracted much scientific attention.

In the past most of the research on Black families focused on low-income, multi-problem families (Moynihan, 1965; Rainwater, 1970) which Willie (1974a) refers to as the under-class and Billingsley (1968) describes as the non-working poor. These families, as discussed in the previous section, have absorbed a highly disproportionate amount of social research interest. The study of the non-poor working and middle-class Black families has been limited mostly to research which concentrated on comparing the differences in middle-class and lower-class patterns of parental socialization of children or which focused on described class differences in the husband-wife relationships as revealed in an experimental situation (Kamii and Radin, 1967; Hess and Shipman, 1965; Blood and Wolfe, 1971; TenHouten, 1970; Mack, 1971).

Otherwise, social scientists, before and after Moynihan, who were interested in Black families, have primarily limited their studies to the low income Black family and have then generalized to all Black families (typically without apology or explanation). They have documented the conditions of poverty and presented these findings as descriptive of the family life of Black people.[1]

The rich variety and unique adaptations of Black family life have been best described in recent years, perhaps, by anthropologists such as, Eliot Liebow who in the sixties described the life styles of unskilled low-income street corner men in Tally's Corner or Ulf Hannerz whose Soulside: Inquiries into Black Ghetto Life analyzed the everyday lives of Black low-income men and women or Virginia Young (1970) who recorded Black family life among the residents of Georgiatown. Each of these researchers described sub-groups - that is, they found a number of different types of

[1]For a critique of family sociology textbooks' treatment of the Black family see Peters (1974).

families who shared certain important characteristics and value systems.

Valentine (1971), reporting preliminary findings of an on-going ethnographic study of low-income families living in a large northern city, found evidence of at least fourteen different Black sub-groups whose life styles differed in a number of significant ways. Valentine wrote,

> "These cultures present distinctive group identities and behavior patterns, including languages and dialects, aesthetic styles, bodies of folklore, religious beliefs and practices, political allegiances, family structures, food and clothing preferences, and other contrasts derived from specific national or regional origins and unique ethno-histories" (p. 140).

These cultural systems are maintained through their child-family-community patterns of interactions.[1]

What has recent child development research contributed to understanding of the heterogeneity of the family environment of Black children and their families? Although the bulk of research on Black children has been school-oriented, concentrating on academic achievement, I.Q., or on language development (Black English), there have also been studies on the socialization of children within Black families. In the following section a group of sociological/psychological studies, in which some attention was paid to parent-child interaction or child-rearing patterns within the study of broader aspects of the Black family, will be discussed. These studies describe the heterogeneity of the life styles and interpersonal relations within Black families and attest to the fallacy of assumptions about "the" Black family.

For convenience these studies have been grouped into three categories: A, general descriptive studies of Black families which include, but are not limited to, parent-child interactions; B, studies of relationships within Black families which do not include parent-child interactions but are relevant to child socialization; and C, studies of husband/wife roles and relationships which included inquiry into parental attitudes

[1] Escalona's (1973) detailed report of the first two years of two babies from low income families emphasized the totally different experiences two families with similar incomes may provide.

TABLE I

Sociological/Psychological Studies on Black Family Life - The Environment for Child-Rearing

A. General descriptive studies of Black families which includes, but are not limited to parent-child interactions.

B. Studies of relationships within Black families which do not include parent-child interactions, but are relevant to child socialization.

C. Studies of husband/wife roles and relationships which include inquiry into parental attitudes on child-rearing behavior.

	WHERE				URBAN/RURAL		PARENT INVOLVED			SES		
A	No.	Dp. So.	S.W.	W.	Urban	Rural	No.	Fa.	No. & Fa.	L.C.	W.C.	M.C.
Scanzoni	x				x				x		x	x
Rainwater			X		x		x			x		
Ladner			x				x					
Schulz			x		x		x			x		
Smith, F.		x				x			x	x		
Young		x				x			x	x	x	
Guillory		x			x				x	x		
Leopold	x				x		x			x		
Holland		x			x				x	x		x
B												
Kronus	x				x			x			x	x
Babchuk & Ballweg	X				x				x	x	x	x
Stack	x				x		x			x		
Williams & Stockton			x		x					x	x	x
Hays & Kendel	x				x				x	x		x
Romakumar	x	x			x	x	x			x		
Brodber & Wagner			x		x		x			x		
Spanier & Fishel	x				x		x			x		
C												
TenHouten				x	x				x	x		x
Mack				x	x				x	x		x
Smith, J.		x			x					x		
TOTALS	8	6	5	2	17	3	8	1	9	17	5	8

or child-rearing behavior. (See Table I).

Some of the studies in category A are reports of sociological research conducted in the sixties and are included as evidence of the kind of data available to researchers. Four of these are quite well known (Scanzoni, 1971; Rainwater, 1970; Ladner, 1971; Schulz, 1969), the findings having been available for quite some time. Even a casual reading of Scanzoni's report of the parental values and attitudes of Black families above the poverty level in a midwestern city, Rainwater's detailed description of very poor Black families living in one of the worst slums in the country, Ladner's insightful account of very low-income girls and Schulz's provocative descriptions of very low-income boys growing up in that same slum reveal the enormous differences in the social, physical, and emotional environments of these urban families. Two ethnographies, one by F. Smith (1973) which described the parental discipline practices and beliefs and one by Young (1970) which was concerned with Black families living in a small town in Georgia, provide descriptive summaries of child-rearing practices in two very different rural communities.

Two investigations (Guillory, 1972; Leopold, 1969) focused on "survival techniques" and "daily methods of coping" in the low income multi-problem Black family. Guillory's research measured patterns of mutual aid, persistence of rural values, decision-making, religiosity, as well as attitudes toward work, child-rearing, and marriage of Black families living in a large southern city. Leopold investigated the "positive features" in the life styles and coping patterns of northern inner city Black poor families through home observations and participant observation. Both Guillory and Leopold reported great variety in resourcefulness and unique patterns of family living and child-rearing arrangements. In the final study in category A, the usefulness of the "culture of poverty" thesis in understanding Black family life styles is

tested.

Holland (1972) reported the results of data (collected in Austin, Texas, in connection with an urban renewal project) which was analyzed in respect to the four aspects of living which, according to Oscar Lewis, "the culture of poverty" influences. He found the individual traits ascribed to the poor to be as characteristic of the non-poor as the poor.

Let us turn now to research which focuses on some aspect of Black family life, other than parent-child relationships, but which nevertheless provides some information as to the variety or similarity of family life styles within the Black subculture. These are grouped together in category B. Kronus (1970) studied Black middle-class and blue-collar males and reported significant differences in the cultural style of life of these two groups, although the family patterns and consumption patterns were similar. This supports the theoretical social class conceptualizations of Billingsley (1968) and Willie (1974a) concerning observed class distinctions within both middle-class and lower-class Black families.

At the same time recent research reported by Babchuk and Ballweg (1972) indicated that there are important similarities in the structure of Black families which cut across lower-class, working-class and middle-class classifications. This study examined the primary relations (including family and friends) of couples from each social class background and found no significant differences in the primary relations with kin and friends between the three social classes. Stack (1974a; 1974b) in her investigations of kin networks in a Black community found strong patterns of kin and friend mutual interactions and support among second generation Black families receiving welfare. This social unit of cooperation was seen as a survival strategy among the poor Black women which provided an expanded domestic network intimately involved in the social-

ization of children and maintenance of family life.

Two additional studies which examined structure and extended kin relationships of Black families both appeared in the February 1973 issue of the Journal of Marriage and the Family. Williams and Stockton examined the structural variations of the nuclear and extended families found among 321 Black households in one neighborhood of a large city in the southwest. Eight different family-child arrangements were observed out of 18 different household types which were located in that community. Hays and Mendel studied extended kinship relations in Black and white families, about 2/3 of whom were lower-class. Kinship and kin interactions were found to be more important to the Black families studied and the extended kin network played an important role in the socialization of Black children.

Not all studies contribute useful information concerning the familial environment of Black children, however, although the topic of research may look promising. The pervasive Moynihan myth of the Black matriarchy has inspired a number of interesting research efforts - some by social scientists who doubt the matriarchy myth, some by researchers who assume, as in the three studies that follow, that the myth is true.

Romakumar's (1971) discussion of Black households assumed homogenizing effects of poverty on Black families to document illegitimacy, father absence, and unemployment. An investigation by Brodber and Wagner (1970) claimed to use anthropological techniques to study the "social structure of Black families living on welfare in the 'central' area of a large West Coast city ... in order to present a dynamic view of the socializing unit in action" (p. 168). In actuality, the authors made value judgments concerning various aspects of the lives of the families studied and found each to be wanting. A study (Spanier and Fisbel, 1973)

which examined the influence living in a housing project has on parental childrearing, discussed mostly what parents could not do, and like the Brodber and Wagner study, implied without descriptive evidence that all of the families faced similar inconveniences and problems which they were helpless to resolve satisfactorily.

Not all researchers looked for maladaptive behaviors. A small, but important, group of studies examined the husband/wife interactions within the Black family in order to assess the family power relationships. Grouped here into category C, these investigations incidentally shed some light on the child-rearing attitudes of Black parents and are thus of interest to us. The question we ask of these studies is, are the parental attitudes thus revealed similar? Do Black parents have similar attitudes toward child-rearing in low-income or middle-income, urban or rural families?

Two studies of husband/wife relationships (TenHouten, 1970; Mack, 1971) have become classics in the field of the Black family, if judged by the frequency they have appeared in print in the past two or three years, either quoted in articles on the Black family or reprinted in family sociology readers. This research examined the power relationships within Black families. TenHouten interviewed 148 nuclear Black families (also 138 white families) with children in order to study family role structure and the performance of family roles. As part of the assessment, husband and wife were asked to indicate agreement/disagreement with the statement "Raising a child is more a mother's job than a father's". Lower SES Black husband and wife (as well as lower SES white husband and wife) tended to agree with this statement. However, higher SES spouses (both Black and white) tended to disagree. The TenHouten study also asked the children of his subjects to indicate whether mother, father, both parents, or neither parent made most of the rules for the family. TenHouten found

that when it comes to parental control "about 3/4 of the families are egalitarian, so that neither the father nor the mother exerts a disproportionate amount of control over the child's activities ... Among Blacks there are virtually no effects for the SES variables" (p. 165). Parental socialization and educational goals were also ascertained by questioning children concerning their perceptions of parental attitudes and abilities. Black mothers and Black fathers were both seen as providing considerable instrumental help, suggesting of course, an egalitarian relationship. This study found lower-class and middle-class Black fathers to be "supportive and instrumental in contributing to their children's educational achievement" and it found both lower-class and middle-class mothers also to be supportive and instrumental (more so than their white counterparts, in fact). The difference between middle-class Black families and lower-class Black families was found to be more a matter of degree than kind. Black mothers were more powerful in the lower-class group (although Black fathers were not seen as powerless) and Black mothers and fathers were equally powerful in the higher SES group.

The Mack (1971) research similarly focused on the husband/wife power relationships in Black and white, middle-class and lower-class families. In this study 80 married couples, matched as to race and social class, were asked who they felt was more powerful in their marriage and then were observed resolving differences of opinion in a number of situations. Working-class husbands were found to dominate resolution of differences of opinion on the questionnaire, while middle-class husbands were more powerful in a bargaining task. Although Black middle-class husbands were found to have the least to say in a discussion with their wives about child-rearing in general, social class differences were found to far outweigh those of race.

A third study (Smith, 1972) which investigated the husband/father role in lower-class urban Black families also did not support the matriarchy myth. In this study the low-income fathers were found to be actively fulfilling their own and their wives expectations as fathers (and husbands) - expectations and performances which were compatible with the values of the lower-class Black community.

These husband/wife, male/female role studies all reflect the complexities in mother/father/child interactions within the Black family. Table I summarizes the studies discussed under Assumption 2: the Black family provides a homogeneous environment for child-rearing. Not intended to be exhaustive of the entire sociological/psychological literature on the Black family, these twenty studies reflect the emphasis of most research on Black families.

The bulk of the investigations have involved urban, low income families. However, families have also been studied that are rural, southern, one-parent and two-parent, working-class or middle-class. The findings of these studies point to the variety of environments affecting Black families, whether urban or rural, whether north or south, and whether nuclear, extended, or attenuated. These studies, although devoted primarily to poor Black families, provide evidence of the variety of styles of living and the great diversity in types of parent-child interaction, behavior patterns that cannot be conceptualized in the ubiqitous term, "cycle of poverty".

All of this suggests that unidimensional concepts of modal patterns of childrearing or personality development within the Black culture are of limited usefulness (if useful at all) in understanding the dynamics of interaction, even within a circumscribed Black community that shares similar environmental circumstances. Many of these studies attest to the unten-

ability of the hypothesis postulating an homogeneous environment for childrearing within Black families, even for families sharing the same economic bracket or geographic area. They do suggest, however, the usefulness of an ecological model in studying Black families.

Assumption 3: The Black family is matriarchal

This assumption is actually a corollary to the assumption concerning the universally poor environments of Black children which has been discussed above. However, the pervasiveness of this assumption and its potential influence on how research into parent-child relationships is conceived dictates further examination of the issue.

We know, of course, that female-headed families, where no male is present, are by definition matrifocal. However, according to the U. S. Census Bureau (1974) both husband and wife are present in two-thirds of all Black families. In Black families below the poverty level, almost two-thirds (64%) are headed by females. If father-absence is found mostly in low-income families, then, low-income families may be matrifocal. In the sociological/psychological literature about the Black family, however, the concept of matrifocality is usually called matriarchy[1] and seems to be interpreted to mean female dominance. This term seems to refer, indiscriminately, to one or both of two different situations: (1) household composition, that is, absence of father, and/or (2) maternal ~~authority~~ dominance, which is the assumed power of the wife/mother within the family. Weisman (1973) has added parental employment, referring to the economic role of the woman, as a third factor often incorporated within the concept of matriarchy. Because the Black wife/mother is more likely to be in the labor force (in contrast to the traditional white housewife who is expected to be at home) the Black family with a working wife may therefore be class-

[1] Matriarchy is defined as "1. a society in which lineage is established through the female line, 2. any social unit under the rule of a woman" (Chaplin, 1968).

ified by the researcher as matriarchal.

Moynihan (1965) used the term, matriarchy, to refer to the matrifocal[1] families he studied. This is perhaps the beginning of the confusion. If Black families were matriarchal as Moynihan (1965) and Frazier (1948)(whose research and writings helped to form Moynihan's basic conceptualizations) claimed, then one would expect to find matriarchy to be characteristic of Black families cross-generationally. This has not been found to be true (Heiss, 1972; Kriesberg, 1970).

Nor has research which has examined Black matriarchy in the maternal dominance sense of the term found support for the myth, as we have seen (TenHouten, 1970; Mack, 1971; Smith, J., 1972). Yancey (1972) has summarized this earlier research quite succinctly. He writes that the research of

> "Middleton and Putney (1960) found no differences in family values between blacks and whites. Significantly their data were collected in the South during the late 1950's, where one might expect a cultural tradition stemming from slavery and reinforced by Jim Crow to be present. Blood and Wolfe (1960) report data which suggest that white families were slightly patriarchal, while Negro families were egalitarian, rather than matriarchal. Hyman and Reed (1969) report results from national samples indicating that there is little difference between blacks and whites in the matrifocal character of family structures. Schulz (1969) also questions the matriarchal image of Negro families. Based on an ethnographic study of ten Negro families, some of which were 'headed' by females, Schulz points out that men who are not 'official' father or husband perform family tasks and roles of father and husband" (p. 894-895).

Matrifocality, Yancey suggests, is a matter of specific role or structural position, rather than a cultural tradition within Black families.

These investigations, together with those reviewed in the preceeding sections (Baumrind, 1972; Ward, 1972; Entwisle, 1972; Kuvlesky and Obordo, 1972) suggest that Black families, regardless of SES, tend to be egalitar-

[1] Matrifocal, a term first used by Smith (1956) means literally "mother-focused". Tanner (1974) defines the term as referring to "(1) kinship systems in which (a) the role of the mother is structurally, culturally, and affectively central, and (b) this multidimensional centrality is legitimate; and (2) the societies in which these features coexist, where (a) the relationship between the sexes is relatively egalitarian and (b) both women and men are important actors in the economic and ritual spheres." (p. 131).

ian, not matriarchal. Nevertheless, studies assuming a matriarchal Black family persist. A recent study by Weisman (1973) is an example. Entitled, "An Analysis of Female Dominance in Urban Black Families", the research assumed this maternal dominance in the families interviewed, and subsequently found results "contrary to expectations". Female dominance was found to occur principally (and obviously) in the minority of families where the father/husband was absent. Moreover, even then no significant "negative consequences" of female dominance on the behavior or attitudes of family members were found.

Similarly, in a recent study Geerkin and Gove (1974) found no support for their hypothesis that Black families are more matrifocal than white families.

If the mother were dominant in the Black family, (or in Black poor families), one would expect children to be socialized into this role. Two studies which investigated the marriage role expectations of Black teenagers provide some information concerning the socialization of Black youths within their families. Rommel's study (1971) investigated the conceptions college and high school unmarried males attending Black schools in the South had concerning the male familial role. Using choice or non-choice of male-female role activities to classify male parental role conceptions as typical, low-typical, or atypical, it was found that the majority of these respondents had low-typical conceptions of the male familial role, and that the strongest influence on his male role conception was the respondent's father's familial role. Since the low-typical category referred to assignment of the traditionally male familial role responsibilities to both fathers and mothers, it appears that in this sample the majority of the respondents and their fathers are egalitarian in their view of male/female familial roles.

Similarly when Rooks and King (1973) administered the Marriage Role Expectation Inventory and a questionnaire to 12th grade Black boys and girls to ascertain their marriage role expectations, they found that both lower-class and middle-class adolescents in their sample expected egalitarian marriage roles. Apparently, neither lower-class Black youth nor middle-class Black youth in these studies were being socialized into preferring matriarchial family structure.

A recent study (Peters, D., 1975) of Black and white men and women attending a northern college found that the large majority of Black college youth (both male and female) are egalitarian in their attitudes toward male/female family roles.

All of this supports the observation that there is not a cultural tradition of matriarchy, of maternal dominance within the Black family. How then are Black females socialized? What are the familial influences within the Black family? What are the ideal values and roles toward which Black females are socialized, if not into a matriarchy?

A search of the literature in this area reveals its inadequacies. The concentration of research on low-income families who are concerned first of all with coping with poverty has resulted in narrow research within a limited perspective (for example, Eigsti, 1973; Jones, R., 1973).

The matriarchal myth however is easily invoked to explain the behavior of Black females. For example, two studies investigated the fear of success syndrome among young Black women. Both studies (Weston and Mednick, 1970; Puryear and Mednick, 1974) found that the Black college women in their samples were less fearful of success than white college women. This finding was consistent across social class lines and was interpreted as supporting female dominance theories. A more acceptable

explanation, however, following the research discussed here, is that Black females are egalitarian in work role orientation.

The pervasiveness of the matriarchal myth has a selective effect upon choice of alternative explanations of research data. Behaviors different from the traditional male authoritarian role, when observed in the Black family, are quickly defined as maternal dominance. The possibility of egalitarian sex roles or a different sex role value system for males and females within Black families not postulated within a dominant/submissive, either/or dichotomy is rarely considered. Dichotomization into patriarchal/matriarchal or traditional/non-traditional, masculine/feminine categories (as for example, in Blood and Wolfe, 1971) precludes adequate conceptualization of equalitarian or egalitarian role behavior.

Evidence from many sources, as indicated here, point to egalitarian husband/wife relationships and egalitarian sex roles in many Black families, whether lower-class, working-class, or middle-class. Not only are these findings rarely emphasized, but research has provided few answers to such questions as how these relationships are maintained. Nor do we understand how children are socialized in Black families into egalitarian ideology when many influences in the dominant culture project a traditional, patriarchal ideology.

In sum, assumptions concerning the matriarchy of the Black family, though not supported by the literature, serve to limit the productivity of research into socialization practices and patterns of interaction within the Black family in two ways: (1) the matriarchy issue has become a red flag, attracting a disproportionate amount of research devoted to proving or disproving maternal dominance theories, rather than advancing knowledge concerning male/female roles within Black families; and (2) the matriarchy myth, implicit in some research design, forces interpretation

of data within a framework which assumes maternal dominance, thus limiting the usefulness of the research findings.

Assumption 4: Father absence has a negative effect upon Black children

As in the case of the matriarchy myth, the literature on father absence in the Black family reflects the way culture and popular beliefs can influence theories and hypotheses. In the first place, most people view father absence negatively. Secondly, it is commonly assumed that the father is absent in most Black families and that this helps to account for differences in behavior and development of Black children (Moynihan, 1965). If it is basic knowledge that father absence is harmful to a child's development, then it becomes the job of social research to investigate how it is harmful, not if it is harmful.

In a recent review of studies of the personality development of father-absent boys, Biller (1971), one of the most prolific researchers into the effects of father absence, concluded that studies seem to show that the mother-son relationship has an influence on the personality development of the father-absent child and that the "mother-son relationship can have either a positive or a negative effect on the father-absent boy's sex-role and personality development" (p. 313). The use of the terms, "positive" and "negative", implies an assumed, though unspecified, standard. Biller is evaluating the personality of father-absent boys in terms of how closely a father-absent boy's personality is similar to the personality of a father-present boy. Building on the belief that father absence is harmful, two assumptions are made: (1) the norm for the personality of middle-class boys from two-parent families is the ideal for all boys, and (2) the norm for the personality of boys from a father-absent family should be the same as for the boy whose father is present.

Socialization theory that accommodates differences in environment would postulate that growing up in a two-parent family would provide an environment different from that of a one-parent household and would influence children in differing ways. The unarticulated expectation in Biller's research, however, is that a child in a one-parent family should be similar to a child in a two-parent family. There is an implicit assumption that traditional middle-class personality characteristics on a masculinity-femininity continuum represents consistent monolithic cultural ideal personality traits for all males and females. Deviations for the cultural sterotypes would be devalued (for example, males with artistic temperaments or aggressive females). In this perspective "non-masculine traits" in boys (according to white sex norms) are interpreted as "negative" effect of father absence.

A second problem is caused by the association of father absence, not with mother presence (matrifocality), but with maternal domiancne (matriarchy). This too, as we have seen, is popularly believed to be "bad" for children, an assumption which similarly contaminates research propositions. Summarizing some of the father-absence research, Biller (1971) writes, "There is considerable evidence that the boy's masculine development is impeded in the maternally dominated, father present home." Then the author adds, "A striking example of maternal domination occurs in matriarchal families which are very common in lower-socio-economic neighborhoods" (p. 227). Is Biller referring to the father-absent low-income families in poor ghettoes or does this statement refer to the maternally dominated father-present home mentioned in the first question? Biller's research confuses situational maternal dominance due to father absence with functional maternal dominance in a husband-wife relationship.

Still a third problem in assessing the influence of father absence on Black children as revealed in social/psychological studies is that the research on father absence has focused almost exclusively on the lower-class Black family (Biller, 1971; King 1945; Kreisberg, 1970) with the concern typically limited to the male child (Biller, 1968; 1971). Yet Heiss (1972) found that it was the middle-class child, not the lower-class child who was more adversely affected by father absence. The loss of father had a greater impact on the functioning of the middle-class family than of the lower-class family.

Moreover, it may not be correct to assume that the absent father is permanently absent or that a child whose father deserts will grow up in a fatherless home. Kreisberg (1970) found father-absence often to be a temporary status in a lower-class child's life, the period of time between mother's "husbands". In addition, as seen in the families described by Schulz (1969) and Liebow (1966), Black lower-class boys living in a father-absent home often remain in some contact with their real father.

Finally, it is difficult to determine the influence of father absence in the husbandless Black family from research as reported in the literature because of the frequent confounding of racial identity (Harnagel, 1970), social class and sex influences (Biller, 1971; King, 1945).

With these caveats, let us look at father absence research specifically in terms of the areas of popular concern: effect on academic achievement, on children's aggression, and on the socialization of the Black child into appropriate sex role behavior.

Father absence and academic achievement

Most people, regardless of the circumstances, assume that broken homes with no father present are potential, if not actual sources of social, emotional, or academic maladjustment. How accurate are these claims?

Is father absence especially damaging to Black children? Considerable attention has been directed to the connection between father absence and poor academic achievement. Because one-parent families are more likely to have a low income and to be Black (Moynihan, 1965) and because poor Black children's academic achievement is indeed lower than the average white child's (Deutsch, 1972), it has apparently seemed logical to assume that fatherlessness lessened school achievement and aspirations. Kopf (1970), however, found few differences in a comparison of 8th grade father-absent/father present boys and concluded that many father absent boys suffer no ill effects. Wasserman (1972) reported that for the Black boys between ages 10 - 16 in his sample the presence or absence of father failed to discriminate between boys who do better and boys who do poorly in school. Nor has the assumption concerning lower aspirations of children in Black families been supported by research. Kandel (1971), for example, found that Black mothers and their children have high educational aspirations whether the father was absent from the home or not, and Kriesberg (1970) found that husbandless mothers who were employed were the most ambitious for their children.

Father absence and aggression

Father-absent children are also popularly thought to lack self-discipline, to be more aggressive. Here again the literature has not supported common beliefs. Two recent studies of the expression of aggression in young Black children supported the findings of the classic Lynn and Sawrey (1959) research on the children of Norwegian sailors, which found father absent boys (but not girls) to be less aggressive than father present boys. One study (Keller and Murray, 1973) found no difference between father-absent and father-present Black preschool boys. Abramson (1973) found that aggressiveness was related to having an older male

sibling or another adult in the household, not the presence or absence of a father. Similarly, in a study (Rosen, 1969) of Black male delinquency and father-absence, the presence or absence of a father was not found to be related to delinquent behavior. This study did indicate, interestingly, that in households where the father is absent, the delinquent male is less likely to engage in violent behavior if there is a "strong" female present and that the oldest male child is less likely than his younger siblings to become delinquent. This clearly indicates that other influences, such as competence of mother or child's role in the family must be considered along with father-absence when assessing the effects of the absent father.

Father absence and the male role

Perhaps the most compelling theme in father absence research is concerned with masculine identification in young boys.

Are Black males socialized inadequately in father-absent Black families? Two recent studies investigated masculinity in Black boys. Bardaines (1972) found that Black father-absent boys and Black father-present boys both fell in the masculine end of the continuum on the Brown It Scale. Aldous (1972) found that both father-absent and father-present boys were knowledgeable about traditional adult family role assignments.

Are Black males who grew up in father-absent homes less likely to maintain a stable marriage themselves? Weisman (1973) found, as did Heiss (1972) and Kriesberg (1970) that marital instability is not necessarily transmitted cross-generationally. Growing up in a home without the presence of a father does not make a son or daughter more vulnerable to marital interruption in his/her own marriage. Heiss concluded, "the transmission of instability ideal is not the key to the high rates of marital instability among blacks" (p. 90). Hurley (1972) suggests that the lack

of difference in the influence of father absence or father presence in Black working class males is due to "society in general and peer groups in particular" which may compensate for father absence, thus counteracting any deleterious effects. A different explanation is offerred by Walters and Stinnett (1971) who point out in a summary of research in parent-child relationships, that the evidence does not seem to support the explanation of masculine identification in male youth in

> "terms of father-son relationship. Identification with the male role is not just the result of a child's interaction with his father, but is very importantly related to the manner in which his mother relates to the child and to her husband. Also, siblings and other male figures play important roles in influencing the masculine identification of male children." (p. 102).

It is questionable, too, if the self-concept of a child suffers because of living in a broken home. McAdoo (1970) in a study of the self-concept of Black preschool children, found no significant differences in the self-concept of children from father-absent compared to children of father-present homes. Kriesberg's (1970) report of father-absent families in Syracuse, New York, did not find more deviancy or pathology among the children in the low-income Black families he studied.

All of this suggests that in the minority of families where the father is absent, hypotheses based on assumptions as to the negative influence of father absence may be misleading. The simple assumption that "father absence is harmful" reveals little information concerning the dynamics within single parent households within Black lower-class or middle-class families.

As the Heiss (1972) research indicates (as well as the studies of Kriesberg, 1970; Liebow, 1966; Rosen, 1969; Kandel, 1971; Abramson, 1973; Hurley, 1972), there are many factors which influence the development of a child in the father-absent home. Questions as to the sex of the child, the age of the child at the time of the loss of the father, the accessibility and contacts the child maintains with the father, father surrogate,

or other important male figures (peers, siblings), the financial status of the family, the mother's education, and the child-mother relationships are seen to be the important influences in the father-absent home. However, society's general disapproval of the sterotypic conception of maternal dominance seems to unduly influence research on father-absent families, although the pervasive influence of poverty and its impact on the family may be the most important influence on the life styles of a father-absent family. From this perspective, the loss of income due to father absence does indeed have a negative effect upon poor Black families. Other negative effects are seen to be a matter of definition.

Assumption 5: The child-rearing practices of Black parents are related to the academic achievement of Black children

Much of the research on Black children has developed out of concerns of educators and others regarding (1) observed differences in I.Q. and academic achievements of Black and white children and (2) reports suggesting schools make very little impact on the I.Q. or achievement of children when home background factors are controlled.

As the Coleman Report showed, socio-economic variables, such as income, education, and occupation are interrelated and they correlate positively with academic achievement and I.Q. (Coleman, et al, 1966). Demonstration of the relationships between SES and cognitive ability does not, however, explain what happens in one child's experience that results in his superior (or inferior) performance on academic tasks. As Bloom (1964) concluded, "it is what parents do in the home rather than their status characteristics which are powerful determiners in the home environment ..." (pp. 124-125). Shipman (1973) similarly observed that it is important to make "the dis-

tinction between what parents are (e.g. ethnic membership, occupational-educational level) and what they do (e.g. styles of interaction with the child, aspirations communicated to him)" (p. 58).

A number of researchers, therefore, have turned their attention to the dynamics of parent-child interaction as it affects the child's cognitive development. The focus is not so much on identifying differences (or similarities) between parents as on identifying the behavior patterns of individual parent--child relationships. For example, a naturalistic observation study of children of different socio-economic background focused on the mother's role as it influences a child's experience within the home environment (White and Watts, 1973). This research has begun "to unwrap the packaged variables", to use Whiting's terminology; that is, the various behaviors and strategies between mothers and children that characterize a particular family's environment are being described and analyzed.

Some of this research has focused on parent-child interactions within the Black family. The research of Bernstein (1970) on differences in parental language, of Klaus and Gray (1968) on reinforcement patterns of parents, of Hess and Shipman (1965) on parental teaching styles, and of others (Pavenstedt, 1965; Radin, 1965; Kamii and Radin, 1967; Brophy, 1970) found Black lower-class mothers to differ from middle-class mothers in the behavioral variables being observed.

Although studies continue to correlate various social class background (family status) variables, such as father absence, mother's education, or family income with academic achievement (Halpern, 1969; Birns and Golden, 1972; Moore, 1972; Gordon, 1972; Solomon et al, 1972) more interesting recent research on Black families following the work of Hess and Shipman (1965) and others, has investigated family process variables, such as mother's style of teaching or child's mapping strategies, and their correlations

with academic achievement (Holzman, 1974; Sambunsky, 1973; Lindberg, 1973; Clarke-Stewart, 1973; Busse and Busse, 1972; Shipman, 1973; Scott and Smith, 1972).

In a study (Scott and Smith, 1972) which investigated both family status variables and family process variables as obtained from anecedotal records of Home Start visits, the family process variables (but not the family status variables of I. Q. or education of the mother) were found to correlate with the cognitive development of the low-income children. Similar studies have helped to illuminate how mother-child interactions differ among Black families. For example, Brophy (1970) found that the middle-class Black mothers in his sample when teaching their four-year-olds a new task would spend time orientating the child as to the nature of the task by focusing the child's attention onto the salient features or by providing pre-response instructions. Many of the other mothers, who were working-class or lower-class mothers, tended to provide a quick demonstration for the child to show him/her what to do, and then settled into a pattern of allowing the child to respond first and teaching indirectly through "corrective feedback". The former technique was viewed as more effective for socialization purposes since it was used by mothers whose children were higher academic achievers.

This naturalistic observation research which examines relationships between parental behavior and the academic achievement of their children is beginning to provide data concerning specific behavior patterns which seem to be consistently associated with academic achievement in Black children. Some of the qualities which seem to be associated with achievement in Black children, as reported by the studies reviewed here are as follows:

- Mother is more directive concerning the child's academic behavior (Slaughter, 1970; Brophy, 1970).
- Mother is more restrictive as to friends and toys and more concerned about the child's immediate environmental experiences (Slaughter, 1970).
- Mother is controlling of child's behavior in a generally positive (as opposed to negative and punitive) way (Wyatt, 1973; Shipman, 1973; Brophy, 1970; Clarke-Stewart, 1973).
- Father/mother encourages verbal interaction (Busse and Busse, 1972; Swan and Stavros, 1973; Shipman, 1973; Brophy, 1970; Clarke-Stewart, 1973).
- Father/mother encourages autonomy (Busse and Busse, 1972; Swan and Stavros, 1973).
- Mother is employed full time (Woods, 1972).
- Mother is warm (Shipman, 1973; Clarke-Stewart, 1973).
- Mother is optimistic about future (Shipman, 1973; Swan and Stavros, 1973).
- Mother's feelings of safety, competence, and less stressful life are apparent (Shipman, 1973; Swan and Stavros, 1973; Wyatt, 1973).
- Mother is involved in community (Shipman, 1973).
- Mother is stimulating and responsive (Clarke-Stewart, 1973).

The most striking feature in the above list is that most of these studies report mother-child relationships exclusively. This overlooks, not only the influence of the father in the Black family, which has been shown to be significant (Busse and Busse, 1972), but also the influence of grandparents, siblings, and for the older child, the peer group, which also may affect the child's cognitive abilities (Shipman, 1973).

The childrearing practices of Black parents appear to be related to the academic achievement of Black children, but the factors associated with academic achievement in the low-income Black family are not necessarily the same as in other families. As Shipman (1973) observed, low-income Black families are not an homogeneous group and "the level of stimulation and support offered" in the home covers a "much greater range" than might be expected (p. 96).

Parents are responsive to the total environmental forces. Mothers' behavior may depend on such factors as how optimistic mothers feel about chances of improving their lives (the more optimistic, the more pressure for achievement on the part of their children, and the better the performance of the child). How safe the mother feels her community to be and her attitude toward involvement in community affairs were found to be reflected in the mother-child interaction pattern (Shipman, 1973). These are all related to academic achievement, as we have seen.

Other parental behaviors, however, were found not to correlate with academic achievement. The question that is not addressed in this body of research concerns the functions of the more restrictive, less responsive, more punitive behavior of some Black lower-class mothers. Although these behaviors correlated negatively with children's cognitive development (as determined by their performance on tests that have been standardized on children of the dominant culture) these behaviors could also be interpreted as purposeful and may have positive effects in other, non-academic areas. For example, Baumrind (1972) in a study of Black and white parents mentioned above (p. 23) found that Black families, which would ordinarily be viewed as authoritarian according to white norms, produced the most self-assertive and independent girls - quite unlike girls in authoritarian white families. Similarly, children in Black families where the mothers were employed full-time have been found to have the best school and social adjustment and to be the most self-reliant (Woods, 1972).

If childrearing practices of Black parents are related to the academic achievement of Black children, it is important to know what specific practices effectively stimulate children toward high academic achievement. However, all parental behaviors need not be devoted toward developing high academic achievement if families believe that other attributes are also

important. We do not know which combination of factors will best assure future success for the Black ghetto child. It has not been demonstrated that academic achievement is a certain road to success for any child. (Bane and Jencks, 1972).

Assumption 6: Self-concept of Black children is dependent upon parental stability and economic status.

Studies of self-concept have long been an important part of modern psychological and sociological research, and in recent years an impressive number of studies have been concerned with the self-concept of Black people. The question is asked "How can Black parents rear their children to have a positive self-concept or high self-esteem?" The assumptions underlying this question is that the Black low-income family, whether living in a segregated urban slum or an integrated suburban community, "must" transmit negative images to its children (since institutional racism posits Blacks as inferior). Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) observed that "one assumption generally accepted virtually as an article of faith in the popular and scientific literature is that blacks are more likely to have lower self-esteem than are whites" (p. 1). The fact is, however, as Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) pointed out, after summarizing the research of the sixties on the self-esteem of Blacks and whites, the research literature does not support the general conclusion that the self-esteem of Blacks is lower than the self-esteem of whites.

The real question, then, is how do Black parents rear their children to have a positive self-concept? We are interested in learning how the family influences the self-esteem of children and how children respond to various environmental influences. Particularly, we would like to know how (or if) parental stability (father absence) and economic status

(poverty) - when these situations exist in a family - affect a child's self-concept. Unfortunately, however, most studies of the self-concept of children do not provide this information.

Of the 21 studies described in Table II, only two involved parents (mothers) and only one (Miller, T., 1972) assessed a relationship between parent and child. Most studies report what children are like, what they say, how they feel, and how children compare with each other. The parent-child interaction is rarely determined. Moreover, these studies, although interesting, can not be legitimately compared, since the foci, measuring instruments, populations studied, and research designs vary considerably. Tentative observations can be made, however, concerning the issues of family stability and economic status.

Low self-concept is not consistently associated with either poverty or family instability. On the contrary, in almost every study, lower-income children tended to have higher self-concepts than their higher-income peers. In addition, Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) reported from their study that "membership in a separated or never-married family appears to do virtually no damage to the self-esteem" (p. 77). When Black children and white children were compared (as in 12 of the studies), white children (even when middle-class and suburban) were generally found to have lower self-concepts than Black children. The most important exception to this is the Porter (1971) study which found white children higher in self-esteem than Black children. These findings, though limited, are fairly consistent in indicating that the important influences in a Black child's life tend to be the family-child interactions (family processes), rather than family background characteristics (family status), such as parental stability or economic status, as suggested in this hypothesis.

TABLE 2

Summaries of 21 Recent Studies of Self-Concept/Self-Esteem of Black Children and/or Their Parents

Investigator and Date	Sample	Focus of Study	Findings on Self-Concept/Self-Esteem
1. Bishop (1974)	Mothers on welfare/ Mothers not on welfare	Self-concept as related to variables: education, occupation, employment status, occupational and educational aspirations, earned income	Higher self-concept among mothers not on welfare, low educational aspiration as an adolescent, higher earned income, higher employment status
2. Caplin (1969)	Black boys and girls/ White boys and girls in Intermediate grades in de facto segregated and desegregated schools	Compare self-concepts by race and by segregated or desegregated schools	Children in segregated schools had lower self concepts; more positive self-concepts among higher achievers
3. Carpenter and Busse (1969)	Children of welfare mothers (Black and white) in grades 1-5	Development of self-concept in Black compared to white children	Girls lower in self-concept than boys; 5th graders lower in self-concept than first graders; no racial differences
4. Davids (1973)	Black/white children, 3-6 years old	Compare self-concept in two groups	No differences
5. Dixon (1972)	Male/female Black Advantaged/Disadvantaged children in grades 8-12	Comparison of self-concepts	Disadvantaged children had more negative self-concept at grade 8, which disappeared by grade 12
6. Epstein and Komorita (1971)	Black males 10, 11, and 12 years old	Assess internal/external locus of control as to success/failure and relationship to self esteem	High self-esteem boys were more internal; failure was attributed to external causes
7. Horton (1971)	Urban preschool Black children	Assess self-concepts of children before and after a "Black heritage" program	Children found not to differ in self-concepts than normative population (white Middle-class)

TABLE 2 (continued)

Investigator and Date	Sample	Focus of Study	Findings on Self-Concept/Self-Esteem
8. Jackson (1972)	Black college students	Explore and compare self concepts of Black males and females	No differences
9. Kearney (1973)	Black and white children, aged 4 and 5	Explore development of self esteem; assess variables	No relationships found
10. Markovics (1974)	Black children, aged 7-9 years	Relationship of racial identity and self esteem	Relationships difficult to establish because they vary according to measures used
11. McAdoo (1970)	Black children attending Head Start	Compared northern vs southern sample on self concepts	Southern children higher
12. Miller, J. (1971)	Black/Chicano children, 5-7 years old	Racial preference	Black males had weakest preference for own race
13. Miller, T. (1972)	Mothers and their 8th grade children Black/white; middle-class/lower-class; urban/suburban	Parental verbalization concerning their children and relationships to self-esteem in children	Descriptive parent associated with high esteem in children; judgmental parent associated with low esteem in child
14. Mulvihill (1974)	11- and 12-year olds whose mothers are family's primary breadwinners	Assess self-concept of children whose mothers are primary breadwinners	No differences
15. Porter (1971)	Black and white children, aged 3-5	Assess racial attitudes and compare self-esteem	Whites higher than Blacks
16. Powell (1973)	Black and white school children in urban south	Determine and compare self-concept in both groups	Blacks higher than whites Blacks higher in segregated school

TABLE 2 (continued)

Investigator and Date	Sample	Focus of Study	Findings on Self-Concept/Self-Esteem
17. Rosenberg and Simmons (1971)	Black/white, disadvantanged urban children in grades 3-12	Compare self-esteem	Blacks higher than whites
18. Soares and Soares (1971)	Black/white, disadvantaged/advantaged urban children in grades 4-8	Compare self-perceptions	Blacks higher than whites
19. Trowbridge (1972)	Black/white children/ low/middle SES in grades 3-8	Correlate SES variables with self-concept	Lower SES higher on self-concept, social self-peer, and school-academic items; middle SES higher on home and parent items
20. Wheeler (1974)	Black preschool children	Correlate self-concept with various variables	No significant differences
21. Zipper (1972)	Black/white; delinquent/non-delinquent; 9th grade males	Comparison of self-concept and other personality characteristics	No differences in self-concept between groups

Discussion and Summary

In this paper I have discussed recent research on parent-child relationships in Black families, organized around a framework of six general assumptions that seem to be explicitly involved when hypotheses are made concerning socialization patterns within the Black family. These assumptions were not intended to be mutually exclusive; they are, in fact, interrelated and merely provide a series of foci on one aspect, one perspective of complex, interacting, everchanging Black families.

It is important to understand the forces involved as Black children grow up in their complex world, as we must understand the development of all children. Social scientists, whether involved in the production of research on the child and family or whether they are concerned with the formulation of government policy and programs designed to improve child and family life need and want to know the process as well as the effects of subcultural socialization, so that, as Hoffman (1974) has written, "predictions and action implications are meaningful in the face of a changing society" (p. 225).

The literature that has been reviewed here has touched on various aspects of the influences in the Black child's development: the child, the family, the subculture, and the larger society in which Black children live. It supports, it seems to me, a theory which conceives the child as active in his/her own socialization process. This theory, as discussed in the introduction (see p. 11) accounts for parental mediation of family-subcultural-societal influences, on the one hand, and the child and his behavioral responses on the other, which in turn help to determine parental childrearing behaviors and attitudes.

Acceptance of this child-family-culture-society interaction model

clearly indicates the kind of psychological/sociological research that can be relevant to Black families. Basic recognition and understanding of the complexity of the research problem when studying Black poor families can be seen in the increasing use of the ecological research model involving naturalistic observational techniques to investigate family behavior within its normal everyday environment. Two examples of well-conceived research in two different areas will be described here in order to illustrate more promising research directions. The selection of these two research studies does not indicate that these particular investigations are without methodological weaknesses or that they are the best studies in their fields. They are, however, interesting, innovative, careful in detail, and seem motivated to find out rather than to support or defend some unarticulated beliefs.

The Schoggen and Schoggen (1971) study, entitled "Environmental Forces in the Home Lives of Three-Year-Old Children in Three Population Subgroups", was designed to obtain data concerning the actual life experiences of three-year-olds. Active environmental inputs were recorded, relationships explored, and the data were compared with popular assumptions concerning the social environment of low-income children and with findings from relevant childrearing research literature.

The controlled sample of 24 children, twelve females and twelve males, was as follows: eight were from low-income, low education, rural homes; eight were from low-income, low education, urban homes, and eight were from middle-income, high education, urban homes. The two urban groups had an equal number of Black and white children.

All of the low-income children were below the Head Start maximum income allowance and all of the middle-income children's fathers had completed college and held high status positions. In addition, most of the children

were matched across groups as to family size and ordinal position. All of the families, except one, were two-parent families, but the report does not indicate whether or not any of the mothers were in the labor force.

All observations in this study were conducted in the family's home at times when the mother would be expected to be present. However, observers would visit at different times of the day in order to obtain a sampling of the child's various activities, including family meal time. Observers, moreover, were careful to make several adaptation visits before beginning the actual recording of the observation in a family. Both Black and white observers were used, with Black observers visiting the low-income Black homes and white observers visiting the low-income white homes. In the middle-income families, both Black and white observers were used in both racial situations. At least eight observational protocols were obtained for each family.

Observers, all female, were trained and checked for observer reliability. They made verbal recordings, using a shielded microphone and a small battery-powered tape recorder. In addition, logs were kept. In all, 198 specimen records were developed, covering 5,477 minutes of observations -- representing a mountain of material. Coding techniques were developed for analyzing the data, utilizing a basic unit termed the Environmental Force Unit, or EFU. This was defined as "any action by a social agent in the child's environment which (1) occurs vis-à-vis the child, (2) is directed toward an end-state or goal specified or implied for the child, and (3) is recognized as such by the child" (p. 12).

Inter-observer coding reliability was established and each of the 8,399 interacts or EFU's were coded according to a set of descriptive variables especially devised for handling these data. Using several computer programs, these data were analyzed.

One purpose of this study was to create a library of specimen docu-

mentary records which would then be available for other researchers, particularly for pilot studies. An entire set of records was filed at the University of Kansas Midwest Field Station. Finally, the study reported its results as they applied to hypotheses derived from popular assumptions about "culturally deprived" children and in terms of theories in the childrearing research literature.

Interestingly, some of the findings of this research did not necessarily support popular suggestions about children from low-income homes. The authors wrote

> "Evidence from this analysis failed to support the suggestion of Gray, et al, that children in low-income homes receive less input from the environment. However, other suggestions of Gray, et al, were supported by data in the present analysis. The children in the low-income homes did receive less verbal input, more inhibiting behavior and less input directed toward specific behavior of the subject" (p. 82).

The results also differed somewhat from theoretical conceptualizations. The warmth-hostility dimension in parent-child interaction and the aggressive acts category were seen to be less meaningful since the majority of child-parent actions were neutral and few aggressions toward mother were observed.

This study was reported here in detail, not so much for the findings concerning three-year-olds, although they are informative, but because of (1) the good methodology and careful controls, (2) testing of assumptions and of theoretical constructs, and (3) the availability and usefulness of the data.

The second study to be reported here, Delores Mack's 1970 investigation of "The Husband-Wife Power Relationship in Black Families and White Families" is offered as an example of a Black/white comparative study that is better designed than most. Eighty married couples were placed into four matched groups: Black middle-class, white middle-class, Black working-class, and

white working-class. Social class was determined from education and occupation, omitting the usual income criteria in recognition of the fact that white families with comparable education usually have a higher income.

Each couple was given five different experimental tasks. Two were descriptive tasks, three were interactional tasks. Each husband and wife pair discussed two questions, one involved politics (a male-oriented topic), the other involved childrearing (a female-oriented topic). Mack reported that most of the couples, when discussing these questions, divided the talking equally, according to his/her area of competency.

In the interactional task, the couples first responded individually to a questionnaire concerning his/her perception of their usual decision-making. Then they responded jointly to the questionnaire and were observed as they reconciled any differences of opinion. The final task involved bargaining in a hypothetical market situation. Mack reported that the four groups were similar in their decision-making, with the wife being slightly more powerful in most couples. However, the sources of power in the husband-wife relationships were seen to differ between the Black and white couples.

In this research the varied activities in the experimental situation provided some opportunity for the power relationship between husbands and wives to be assessed under differing circumstances. In addition, the structural task situation provided a consistent format in which to assess behaviors.

Although the design provided no opportunity to determine if behavior seen in the test situation was consistent with behavior under normal circumstances and although there was no control for age of spouses, for age differentials between spouses, for ordinal position in family of orientation, or for other variables (besides class and race) which might

be important, this study nevertheless moves beyond the assessment of family status variables to begin to examine family process variables.

The Mack study and the research of the Schoggens share a common focus. Both investigate family interaction and attempt to observe and interpret the behaviors and strategies of Black families within the framework in which they occur. This kind of non-pejorative perspective is necessary if we are to understand the dynamics of Black families, living in a subculture within a larger culture.

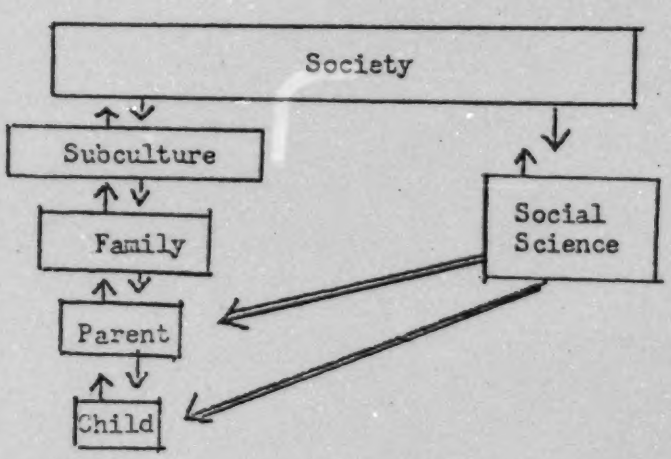
From research to program

Acceptance of a child-family-culture-society interaction research model, however, can lead to questioning of the assumptions upon which some of the newer approaches to early childhood education (such as Parent and Child Centers; Home Start) are based. These Federally funded educational programs are designed to "upgrade" the competencies of all the poor, especially the Black poor. Minority parents are encouraged to participate in socialization practices imposed on them by outsiders, albeit benignly (I. Gordon, 1969; Karnes, 1968; Levenstein, 1969). The concern here is not so much with the process as with the value judgments of those making the decision as to which behaviors are desirable for children (and their parents) and which are not.

Well-meaning parent-training programs, while perhaps appropriate for persons operating within their own culture, represent a new model of culture transmission. Procedures are developed for altering behaviors of people who have little or no part in determining the direction or goals for their own children as presumed by these programs. The policy intervention model bypasses the constraints and inputs of important natural

intervening buffers between society and child, that is, the influences of the subculture and the family. The policy intervention model is represented as follows:

Policy Intervention Model



The philosophies and values of social science of the larger society can be seen in this model as operating directly on the parent and child. There are two points of concern: first, behaviors of Black parents and children are being changed in ways over which they have no control; second, program architects and administrators who are making decisions about behavior change are often outside the Black or minority subculture and are therefore unresponsive to the subtle checks and balances within the subculture. If social scientists are unaware of their own preconceptions, their own cultural values for the subculture and the implications of the changes they advocate in Black or other minority families, these "experts" may suggest behavior changes guided by the norms and standards of the white middle-class American society.

There is evidence that well-intentioned teachers impose their values in ways which may be subtly inappropriate from the perspective of the Black family. Rosenthal (1968) found, for example, that a teacher may not

like it when the behavior of a child does not conform to the teacher's expectations. When a child who has been classified as slow begins to perform capably, a teacher may reject this unexpected competency. Similarly, acceptable behavior of a Black child may be defined differentially, depending on the value system of the adult. In a study which investigated the views Black and white teachers had of their Black students who were from lower-class families, the behaviors that the Black teachers described as "fun-loving, happy, cooperative, energetic, and ambitious" (in that order), the white teachers saw as "talkative, lazy, fun-loving, high strung, and rebellious." As Bardo et al (1974) commented, "while this list of adjectives does not describe specific behaviors, it does seem clear that if behaviors were selected to be changed, the white and Black teachers would seek to change different behaviors" (p. 22).

Who should determine which behaviors of children are preferred and which should be altered? The traditional controls on behavior within a society, the checks and balances operating as rewards or survival vs. punishment or elimination, normally controlled by the culture, and maintained by the family, are now, as shown in the policy intervention model, incorporating new, external influences that are not accountable directly to the cultural system and need not, in fact, be monitored by the subcultural system. Thus, the mediating influence of parent and of child may be unduly altered.

If the model presented here is a tenable one, then this may be an undesirable, certainly a questionable, procedure. As a devalued group in American society whose highly visible identity has prevented the possibility of physical or cultural assimilation over time, Black Americans have developed patterns of coping that are specific to the reality of their

situation, ethnic identity, and survival (H. Gordon, 1972). These patterns of behavior may not conform to middle-class expectations, but are in Hannerz's (1969) term, "ghetto-specific" and have adaptive and survival value.

Social scientists involved in policy making or research can not, then, use a model which bypasses parent and family. The social values of behavioral scientists advocating change in the socialization of minority children may easily encompass social values and goals somewhat different from those of the target group.

That this by-pass of the influence of parents and family can and does happen is illustrated in a recent study (Ross, 1973) which assessed the influence of expert and social peer on the behavior of low income Black mothers. In a carefully controlled situation, these mothers were found to respond (that is, take the advice of) more to the white expert in his area of expertise than to the Black non-expert social peer.

If the Black subculture and Black family influences are bypassed in the process of determining or changing behavioral interactions between parent and child, then the Black underclass (the Black poor) is vulnerable to exploitation by the dominant society. To institute change involves, not only a knowledge of how children grow and develop, an understanding of theories of childhood social and cognitive development, but also knowledge of the culture - its ideals, values, preferences, and survival strategies in the face of the real constraints a host culture places upon an institutionally devalued sub-culture.

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